

Chicago Tribune, March 23, 2005

In a push to improve health-care and workplace benefits for military reservists and their families, U.S. Reps. Mark Kirk and Judy Biggert heard testimony Tuesday to gather recommendations for a bill on reservists' rights they plan to introduce in Congress in April.

Leaders from Midwest-based Naval Reserve and National Guard units, along with representatives of several statewide companies, spoke at an ad-hoc hearing held at DePaul University on ways to ease the transition from civilian life to military service.

Kirk and Biggert, both suburban Republicans, plan to introduce the Americans in Uniform Act of 2005, which includes a pay increase for reservists serving in high-risk missions.

The hike would make their pay more comparable with salaries of full-time servicemen.

"When you are flying at night in Iraq, the reservists are exposed to 100 percent of the risk, just like his active-duty counterpart," Kirk said. "We need to change that rule because many of these special pay benefits are for critical skills we need. We shouldn't shortchange reservists."